

Newsletter

Christmas Report

The tree went up on the first of December, the halls were decked with tinsel, and the invites went out to our Christmas Party !

We had a changing house over December, with many kids having left near the end of November, and new ones coming in. Despite many young people only knowing one another and the staff for a matter of weeks, the house had quite a homely feel to it and it was great to see the kids supporting one another as well.

Johnson Executives sponsored a very special Christmas Dinner Party the week before Christmas as they have the last couple of years. This year it grew significantly and there were about 30 young people present. Many were faces that had left Caretakers Youth Refuge in the last year or two, but whom we continue to support, and who came back to share the night with us. It was lovely to share a meal, celebrate the year's successes and wish one another a merry Christmas. With the help of donations

from our Happy Holidays appeal, all young people went home with a Christmas present as well as a hug.

Our holiday program kicked off the same day with a trip to the Australasian College of Beauty where the girls had their

Johnson Executive Christmas Party



hair done for the party, and enjoyed a bit of pampering and self care. We were also able to celebrate the holidays (thanks to the Polly's Club) with outings to Cronulla Surf School ; Woronora River for some Kayaking and a crazy game of Laser Tag. It was a great way to celebrate the holidays! Christmas Day came along as we knew it would, and I am pleased to say that with the help of their caseworkers, most of our young people were able to arrange with their families to spend the day at

home. There were one or two young people who did not have plans, and so we arranged a lunch outing to the Vibe Hotel and made sure that there was food, presents and entertainment the same as all kids should have on Christmas day. Santa made it to the refuge for all of our kids (with the help of some very kind local donations and the Happy Holidays Appeal) and we had a bunch of young people who were surprised and pleased to find lovely gifts under the tree.

The week between Christmas and New Years is very relaxed at the refuge, with no school and no other services open. The young people enjoyed the break as well and the activities we did that week.

Before we knew it it was New Years Eve and so the kids from Entity and Caretakers refuges combined forces to watch the fireworks from the balcony rooftop of the refuge, which is something of a tradition now. We welcomed in 2011 with a spectacular view of the city, and a positive outlook for our kids. We look forward to a year ahead that will be full of dreams achieved and problems solved, and thank everyone who helped make the Holiday Season so special.

A BIG THANK YOU TO :

◇ **Johnson Executive** for a beautiful Christmas Party

◇ **Vibe Hotel** for Christmas Lunch

◇ **The Polly's Club** for our holiday outings

◇ *For the gifts that were donated by local resident Kristin and friends*

◇ **Chris Dunn & Fox** for all of the DVDs that were opened on Christmas Day

◇ **Everyone who donated to the Happy Holidays Appeal**

◇ **Westpac** for building gardens for the Options Kids

◇ **Minter Ellison Lawyers** for our trip to the Zoo

◇ **John Colvin** for donating his knowledge and time for our strategic planning

BBQ Fundraiser at Bondi Beach Markets



Young people and staff hard at work

Caretakers hosted its first Bondi Beach Market BBQ Fundraiser in January with 40kg of sausages, 15kg Bacon, 15dozen eggs and an assortment of vegies to fry up. It was a big operation made possible with the assistance of staff and current residents, as well as a group of aftercare clients who maintain strong connections to the service and who were happy to come back and lend a hand.

The young people participating put in long hours and were enthusiastic about contributing in a real way to the organization.

The profit from the day was almost \$1400 which we plan to use to purchase a computer for kids to use at the service as well as for an Options Brokerage Fund to assist with varying needs of our semi independent clients, who don't have Mum and

Dad to fall back on as they make their journey to independence.



WE NEED YOU !!



The next BBQ fundraiser will be held on 17th April 2011 and we would love some community volunteers who are willing to assist ! If you are willing and able, please contact Angie on 9389 0999 or email angie@caretakers.org.au

Caretakers Cottage's Strategic Planning Begins !

This year we are embarking on a major strategic planning process that will lead to some innovative approaches to helping homeless and at risk youth. In the final weekend of January, the managers of all 4 Caretakers' services, as well as our board members, joined consultant and Chairman of Johnson Executives Board of Directors John Colvin at his Hunter Valley retreat . Here we laid down

some foundations for the process, though there is still much work ahead.

As part of our future view, we hope to increase our ability to support parents to fulfill their role in seeing kids through to adulthood and beyond. We are courting the Federal Government to fund a Reconnect program in the Eastern Suburbs, an aftercare program for your people who have left our residential program



and will be launching a fundraising program so that we can fund supports that don't currently attract funding.

Westpac Braves the Elements to Create Some Backyard Bliss

A team of Westpac volunteers donated their day to helping Options set up vegetable gardens in 2 of our properties in December 2010.

The morning started out warm with the sun beating down on their backs as they pulled out weeds, dead trees and leaves disturbing a few spiders along the way and filling up 6 bags of garden waste... and then the ultimate boys toy was bought out, the chainsaw, which saw a heavy amount of tree trimming completed and room made for 2 vegetable boxes. With help from the 2 young residents at the

property 2 garden beds were successfully completed before lunch time with corn, tomatoes, carrots, chillies and some sunflowers planted and ready to grow.

After a quick bite to eat it was on to property number 2 where the sun subsided only to be replaced with big droplets of rain, threatening a storm on the horizon so in record time copious amounts of ivy were uprooted, and 2 more garden beds created before the storm hit, and once it hit it hit hard and set in for the afternoon bringing with it some disturbed mosquitoes none the less the job was done and another 2 residents have now been

given the pleasure of growing their own vegetables in their suburban city backyard.

Options would like to use this opportunity to thank the Westpac volunteers for their dedication and commitment to making the gardens with us for our young residents to experience, it is a great asset for Options to be able to incorporate the skill of growing your own vegetables into the healthy eating and nutrition component of our living skills program. It was a great day, despite

the rain which our fabulous volunteers took in their stride, and we look forward to working with Westpac again in the future.



"It is a great asset for Options to be able to incorporate the skill of growing your own vegetables into the healthy eating component of our living skills program"

Summertime at the Zoo with Minter Ellison Lawyers



On a scorching January afternoon five Caretakers residents met with an enthusiastic team of chaperones from Minter Ellison Lawyers for an excursion to Taronga Zoo. We all met at the

Minters office, (which the young people found most impressive!) and headed down to Circular Quay to catch the ferry over to Taronga. Some of the highlights included seeing the new baby elephant, watching the seal show, hiding in bits of shade (while trying to spot animals that were also hiding from the sun) and the promise of a cold Slurpee when we returned in Circular Quay. One resident thought he might attempt relieve the zoo of one of its turtles for

"adoption", so it was great to have a legal team on hand to explain the intricacies of reptilian abduction law. Fortunately, turtles, lawyers, young people and caseworkers all escaped unharmed and extremely happy with their day. Caretakers would like to extend a massive thank you to Minter Ellison Lawyers for the day out, it was fabulous for our residents to experience such an outing, and have the opportunity to meet such a fantastic and generous group of professionals.